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South Carolina House of Representatives

# Legislative Update

David H. Wilkins, Speaker of the House

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## WEEK IN REVIEW

### HOUSE

The House set for special order, amended, and passed H.4577 which bans video poker. Effective June 1, 1999, the bill adds video poker machines and certain other coin-operated machines or devices used for gambling, to those machines which are prohibited and subject to seizure and destruction. The bill also subjects persons who keep or play the machines to fines and imprisonment.

The House debated and amended H.4115 which prohibits the state of South Carolina and its political subdivisions from using race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin as a criterion for either discriminating against or granting preferential treatment to any individual or group in the state's system of public employment, education, or contracting. The House amended the bill so as to include coverage of religion, age, and disability. The bill was also amended to provide that employment of quotas to achieve equality is prohibited. An amendment provides that the legislation does not preclude state employees from performing their responsibilities in submitting required Affirmative Action Plans to the Human Affairs Commission. House amendments also specify what entities may be considered political subdivisions of the state and provide that no preferential treatment may be granted to families of members of the General Assembly in public employment by the state or its political subdivisions.

The House sent to the Senate Joint Resolution H.4303 which proposes amending the South Carolina Constitution by removing the prohibition on the marriage of a white person with a negro, mulatto, or person with at least one-eighth negro blood. The prohibition on interracial marriages is contained in the state constitution, but, currently carries no force of law insofar as it has been held to violate the United States Constitution.

The House passed H.4459 which provides that the layout and installation of required fire protection sprinkler systems must be in accordance with the 1998 edition of the National Fire Protection Association National Fire Codes and the 1994 Standard Building Code, unless more recent versions have been adopted by the authority with jurisdiction. The bill eliminates the Fire Sprinkler Specification Sheet from the approval process for shop drawings of fire protection sprinkler systems. Consequently, the option to submit the shop drawings to the registered professional engineer who prepared the specification sheet for compliance is eliminated. The bill also eliminates the requirement that shop drawings bear the stamp and authorized signature of the licensed fire sprinkler contractor.

The House amended and approved S.89 which concerns orders of protection in cases of abuse to a family or household member. An order of protection may temporarily enjoin the respondent from abusing, threatening to abuse, or communicating with the petitioner. Current law states that an order of protection must be for a fixed time not to exceed one year. This bill states that the order must be for a fixed time not less than six months nor more than one year. The bill was amended to allow parties who reconcile to agree to dismiss the order if the petitioner appears personally at the offices of the issuing court, shows proper identification, and signs a written request to dismiss based on the reconciliation.



The House amended and passed H.4355, which prohibits the issuance of a liquor license to a business within 300 feet of a child day care facility in a municipality or to a business within 500 feet of a child day care facility outside a municipality. The bill was amended to provide that the restrictions do not apply to new applications for locations if the child day care facility or playground moved to a location within the prohibited distance during a prior period of licensure.

The House passed H.4467, which increases the penalty for violating provisions of the Uniform Securities Act.

The House passed H.4423, which provides that the *sine die* adjournment date for the General Assembly is shortened by one statewide legislative day for each day before March 31 that the annual appropriations act is given third reading by the House of Representatives.

The House refused to concur in Senate amendments to H.3300 which pertains to the issuance of special motor vehicle license plates for fraternities and sororities.

The House approved H.4364 which excludes kidney disease treatment centers, including free standing hemodialysis centers, from the Certificate of Need process. Health care facilities must apply for a Certificate of Need prior to constructing a new facility or modifying an existing facility, and before any expenditure or acquisition is made on behalf of a health care facility in excess of amounts prescribed by DHEC regulations.

## SENATE

The Senate concurred in the House amendments to S.220, which provides that a person is guilty of a nuisance for using a building or other place for the purposes of lewdness, assignation, prostitution, repeated acts of unlawful possession or sale of controlled substances, or continuous breach of the peace. The bill has been enrolled for ratification. After the Senate concurred in the House amendments to S.89, which provides that an order of protection must be issued for a minimum period of six months, the bill was also enrolled for ratification.

The Senate gave third reading and sent to the House the following bills: S.862, which concerns crime classification; S.876, which modernizes the reporting requirements of the comptroller general; S.915, a bill requiring certain unpublished federal opinions to be annotated in the South Carolina Code; and S.621, legislation providing that a motor vehicle at least 30 years old may bear the license plate of the model year of the vehicle. Also receiving third reading were S.198, which requires handicapped parking signs erected after June 30, 1998 to include the penalties for unlawful use (although the bill allows local governments or private property owners to exhaust their existing stock of signs which do not include information concerning the fines); S.865, a bill which deletes a provision in the code allowing a former member of the General Assembly to be elected to a family court judgeship notwithstanding any other provision of law; and S.852, which creates the Jocassee Gorges Trust Fund.

The Senate unanimously passed a Joint Resolution (S.948) which proposes an amendment to the State Constitution to repeal the prohibition against marriages between Caucasian and

African-American persons. Such prohibitions were declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1967 case *Loving v. Virginia*. A similar measure (H.4303) has passed the House.

H.3908 was returned to the House. This bill concerns the seizure and sale of property in instances of delinquent property taxes and provides alternative sites other than the county courthouse for the sale of delinquent property. An amendment concerning bingo licenses was added to the bill. The amendment would allow specified charitable organizations to obtain a bingo license for \$100. Among other requirements, the organization must only use volunteer members who operate the game and the holder of the license may not conduct more than one bingo session a week.

H.3300 was amended in the Senate before receiving third reading. Under the provisions of this bill, the Department of Transportation could issue special motor vehicle license plates featuring the symbol for nonprofit organizations. Before a specialized license plate could be developed, the department would have to receive 300 or more applications requesting the plate. Only certified members of the organization would be eligible for the organization's special license plate. The bill also creates a special license plate on behalf of the *H.L. Hunley* submarine. Once the Senate sent the amended bill back to the House, the House refused to concur in the Senate amendments.

## HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION

### AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

The full Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee did not meet this week.

### EDUCATION AND PUBLIC WORKS

The full Education and Public Works Committee did not meet this week.

### JUDICIARY

The full Judiciary Committee did not meet this week.

### LABOR, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The House Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee gave a report of favorable with amendment to H.4377 which establishes a new tier of licensure as a "Licensed Specialist in School Psychology" which may be obtained by an individual who has a master's degree in psychology and thirty additional hours of course work, and which authorizes the individual to offer his services in the private sector. Under current law, the "school psychologists" who are certified by the Department of Education to work in the public school system may not offer



their services in private sector settings such as hospitals, clinics, private schools, etc. This legislation provides guidelines for the private sector service of Licensed Specialists in School Psychology. A Licensed Specialist in School Psychology is added to the Board of Examiners for the Licensure of Professional Counselors, Associate Counselors, Marital and Family Therapists. The amendment approved by the committee specifies that the bill in no way requires insurance companies to pay for any services of Licensed Specialists in School Psychology.

The committee also gave a report of favorable with amendment to H.3820 which prohibits the practice of psychology without a license from the Board of Psychology and revises the list of acts which are considered to be the practice of psychology. Under the bill, an individual must have a doctoral degree in psychology to be licensed as a psychologist, but such licensure cannot be obtained with a doctorate in an allied field. The legislation revises exemptions to the licensure requirement and increases penalties for violating the requirement. The bill requires the Board of Psychology to report instances of possible violations to the solicitor. The amendment approved by the committee exempts from the licensure requirement certain groups including: educators; day care providers; hospital workers providing intervention within their employ; human resources professionals; business consultants; local, state, or federal employees operating within the scope of their employment; SC Department of Alcohol and Drug Abuse employees; and school psychologists when working under contract to a public or private school, but not if practicing in other settings.

The committee gave a favorable report to H.4459 which was passed by the full House (see House Week in Review, this issue).

The committee tabled two bills: H.3922 which addresses qualifications for registration as a professional engineer; and, H.3552 which assigns county assessors the responsibility of examining new nonresidential structures prior to occupancy.

### MEDICAL, MILITARY, PUBLIC AND MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

The full Medical, Military, Public and Municipal Affairs Committee did not meet this week.

### WAYS AND MEANS

The House Ways and Means Committee met jointly with the Senate Finance Committee to receive a presentation from the State Ports Authority. The State Ports Authority (SPA), responsible for planning, designing, financing, developing and operating public port facilities in Charleston, Georgetown, and Port Royal, is a state agency that functions much like a private business, operating solely on its own revenues and earnings. The mission of the SPA is to contribute to the economic development of South Carolina by fostering and stimulating waterborne commerce and shipment of freight.

SPA representatives reported to the committees that every vessel that calls our state's port terminals generates an average of 37 South Carolina jobs, \$4.7 million in sales revenue, \$1.2 million in personal income, and \$140,000 in state and local tax receipts. The SPA has experienced significant growth in its container business and has begun to experience

congestion at its container terminals. The lead time and complexity to build new terminals is increasing rapidly, and the SPA has recently completed a transition to a new leadership and organizational structure. Deeper channels are required to handle larger ships and increasing volume of trade. Congress authorized deepening the Charleston harbor from 40 feet to 45 feet (for every additional foot of water depth, ships can carry another \$3 million in cargo.) The Federal Government recently appropriated \$2 million to begin the harbor deepening in 1998, and the Joint Bond Review Committee approved a carry-over of \$8.1 in state funds. SPA representatives stated that they will need an additional \$66 million in state funds over the next five years to complete the \$116 million project of deepening the harbor to 45 feet.

SPA representatives also discussed with the committee members their need for expanded development on Daniel Island. Rail and highway access studies are under way, and environmental, navigation and soil studies are also being done. An Environmental Impact Statement is expected to be completed in early 1999.

## **BILLS INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE**

### **AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

#### **H.4594 BREAM AS BAIT FOR FISHING ON THE EDISTO RIVER Rep. Rhoad**

This bill allows a person fishing on the Edisto River to use bream as bait with 9/0 or larger single-barbed set hooks.

#### **H.4618 VOLUNTARY CLEANUP PROGRAM Rep. Sharpe**

This bill establishes the Voluntary Cleanup Program to return to use idled or under-used industrial facilities whose redevelopment is complicated because of contamination. A person who is responsible for the contamination at the site and is subject to a Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) order or permit for assessment and remediation is not eligible to participate. Any non-responsible party (including lenders and economic development agencies) demonstrating financial viability may contract with DHEC to clean up any contaminated site that is not on the National Priorities List for cleanup by the federal government. The contract includes a covenant not to sue the non-responsible party except for consequences that party causes. After signing a voluntary cleanup agreement, the contracting party must submit the appropriate work plans and reports to DHEC for approval. Before the contract is executed, DHEC may provide for public notice and a hearing on the proposed contract.

Upon completion of the contract, the contracting party must submit a release to DHEC, who shall issue the party a certificate of completion, which is a covenant not to sue for successfully complying with the terms of the contract. DHEC shall charge the responsible or non-responsible party for oversight costs associated with the Voluntary Cleanup Program.



## EDUCATION AND PUBLIC WORKS

### **H.4607 CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN**

#### ***PRESCHOOL THROUGH GRADE THREE Rep. Townsend***

This bill amends Title 59 of the *SC Code of Laws*, concerning early child development and academic assistance, by providing that curriculum and programs for children from preschool to grade three must be "individually appropriate" rather than "developmentally appropriate" (as provided under current law.)

### **S.621 MOTOR VEHICLE LICENSE PLATES** Sen. Wilson

This bill provides that a motor vehicle over thirty years old and used for general transportation may bear the license plate of the vehicle's model year instead of its current registration plate, if the current plate is maintained within the motor vehicle and produced upon request of a law enforcement officer.

### **H.4623 INTERMODAL TRAILERS, CHASSIS, CONTAINERS** Rep. Townsend

This bill adds a section to the *SC Code of Laws* creating provisions to govern the operation of an intermodal trailer, chassis, or container. This section includes, but is not limited to, provisions governing inspection requirements (for both the vehicle and for the Department of Public Safety), and provisions concerning compliance with certain federal requirements.

## JUDICIARY

### **H.4593 HATE CRIMES** Rep. Whipper

Under the provisions of this legislation, a person who commits certain offenses with the intent to assault, intimidate, or threaten a person because of his race, religion, color, sex, age, or national origin is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be fined not less than \$2,000 or not more than \$10,000, or imprisoned not less than 2 years or not more than 15 years, or both. The penalties for animal cruelty and malicious injury to property are increased if the person commits those offenses with the intent to assault, intimidate, or threaten a person because of his race, religion, color, sex, age.

### **H.4596 MEETINGS OF THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION** Rep. Harrison

Current law requires the State Election Commission to meet at its offices in Columbia at least once each month. This bill states the commission also may meet at such times as considered necessary by the commission.

### **H.4597 ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES** Rep. Harrison

Parties who have exhausted administrative remedies are entitled to judicial review. This bill states that a petition for review of final decisions from agencies other than the Administrative Law Judge Division may be filed in circuit court. A party aggrieved by a final decision of an administrative law judge in an appeal is entitled to judicial review of that decision by the Supreme Court (currently the appeal goes to circuit court).

The bill also addresses the types of hearings administrative law judges must preside over, including contested cases assigned by law and contested cases not specifically assigned by

law, but which are otherwise required by due process under the U.S. or S.C. Constitution. In addition, an administrative law judge must preside over all hearings of appeals from final decision of contested cases heard by licensing boards and all other departments, boards, and commissions, except the Workers' Compensation Commission, the Public Service Commission, the Human Affairs Commission, and the Employment Security Commission.

For quasi-judicial review of any final contested case decision of an administrative law judge of cases involving departments governed by a board or commission authorized to exercise the sovereignty of the State, a petition by an aggrieved party must be filed with the appropriate board or commission and served on the opposing party not more than thirty days after the party receives the final decision and order of the administrative law judge unless the parties not in default consent to a direct appeal to the Supreme Court on the record at the hearing before the administrative law judge. Appeal in these matters is by right. A party aggrieved by a final decision of a board in such a case is entitled to judicial review of that decision by the Supreme Court. Appeals to the Supreme Court shall be taken in the same manner as prescribed for appeals from the Court of Common Pleas.

For judicial review of any other final decision of an administrative law judge, an appeal must be taken to the Supreme Court in the same manner as prescribed for appeals from the Court of Common Pleas. Appeal in these matters is by right.

**H.4598 ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES Rep. Harrison**

Under the provisions of this bill, administrative law judges are bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct, as regulated and enforced by the Commission on Judicial Conduct. Current law provides that the State Ethics Commission is responsible for enforcement and administration of the Rules for Judicial Disciplinary Enforcement. The bill also states that employees of the Administrative Law Judge Division are subject to the requirements and restrictions set forth in the S.C. Appellate Court Rules. The bill also exempts administrative law judges from certain provisions of law applicable to public officials.

**H.4599 CRIMINAL ACTIVITY Rep. Davenport**

Under the provisions of this bill, a person or his personal representative may not file a civil action for damages for injuries or wrongful death resulting from a crime the person committed.

**H.4605 WRITE-IN CANDIDATES Rep. Townsend**

This bill states that two weeks before a special or general election, a person who intends to offer as a write-in candidate must register with the agency responsible for the election to show his intention to seek the office as a write-in candidate, pay any applicable filing fee, and notify any other candidates of his intention to seek the office as a write-in candidate. The provisions of this section do not apply when a candidate nominated by a political party dies, becomes disqualified after his nomination, or resigns his candidacy for a legitimate nonpolitical reason.

**H.4606 CANDIDATE'S ADVERTISING MATERIAL Rep. Townsend**

The State Ethics Act defines 'committee' as an association, club, organization, or group of persons which receives contributions or makes expenditures in excess of \$500 during an election cycle to influence the outcome of an elective office or ballot measure. Committees must maintain records and file certain reports in compliance with the act. This bill states that an organization not included within the definition of 'committee' under the Ethics Act is subject



to the same requirements of the committee when the organization endorses or aligns itself with a candidate. The bill also states that actual malice is not an element of defamation action by a candidate against an organization that endorses or aligns itself with another candidate for false, erroneous, unfounded information, or accusations.

**H.4611 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS Rep. Beck**

Under the provisions of this bill, for purposes of municipal elections only, a municipality may pool one or more precincts with other precincts and have one voting place for all of these pooled precincts upon specified conditions. Any precinct which contains 500 or more registered voters within the municipality must have its own voting place. In addition, the total number of registered voters within the municipality in each group of pooled precincts cannot exceed 1,500. The voting place of any precinct pooled with others cannot be more than three miles from the nearest part of any pooled precinct, and proper notice must be given of the change in the polling place.

**S.862 CRIME CLASSIFICATION Sen. Holland**

Crimes are classified as felonies or misdemeanors. This bill states that certain offenses (listed in subsection (D) of Section 16-1-100) for which the maximum penalty is imprisonment for five years or more, are felonies. The bill also conforms definitions and terminology in the criminal code, repeals obsolete language, and makes other technical corrections.

**S.915 UNPUBLISHED FEDERAL OPINIONS Sen. Hayes**

This bill requires the annotation in the South Carolina Code of Laws all unpublished opinions which, in the Code Commissioner's opinion, affect or invalidate a South Carolina statute, act, or resolution.

**LABOR, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

**H.4608 MOTOR VEHICLE TITLE AS PLEDGED GOODS AT PAWNBROKERS Rep. Kirsh**

This bill includes within the definition of "pledged goods" accepted by pawnbrokers a certificate of title for a motor vehicle (excluding mobile homes and certain other self-propelled vehicles). The bill provides that if a loan where a motor vehicle certificate of title is the pledged goods remains unpaid after a period of sixty days from the due date or any renewal or extension, the pawnbroker has rights afforded under Chapter 9 of the Commercial Code. The bill places restrictions on when pawnbrokers may make use of these Commercial Code rights.

**H.4609 LICENSURE AND REGULATION OF CHECK-CASHING SERVICES Rep. Kirsh**

This bill provides for licensure and regulation of check-cashing services by the State Board of Financial Institutions. The bill imposes a two hundred fifty dollar application fee and a five hundred dollar investigation fee. Licenses expire annually and may be renewed upon payment of a two hundred fifty dollar fee plus a fifty dollar fee for each branch location. A licensed business must maintain liquid assets of at least fifty thousand dollars per license.

**H.4610 SUPERVISED LENDERS Rep. Kirsh**

This bill revises the Consumer Protection Code by increasing from six hundred dollars to eight hundred dollars the amount at which supervised lenders must lend at restricted lender rates. The bill increases from six hundred dollars to eight hundred dollars the amount for which supervised lenders may not post a rate exceeding the maximum charges for restricted lenders.

**H.4614 ENERGY SAVING PROGRAMS AND DEBT LIMITATIONS Rep. Walker**

This bill specifies that a governmental entity's lease purchase agreement for energy efficiency products or guaranteed energy savings contracts are not to be included among the lease-purchasing or financing agreements which are subject to the state constitutional debt limitations set for governmental entities.

**WAYS AND MEANS**

**H.4595 RETIREMENT SYSTEM SERVICE CREDIT Rep. Cobb-Hunter**

This bill provides that, upon making the payment required to establish federal civilian service, a member of the SC Retirement System or the SC Police Officers' Retirement System may receive service credit for active military duty performed after December 31, 1975. The bill also provides that all other restrictions applicable to establishing credit for military service apply to the military service established pursuant to this payment.

**S.477 TAXES ON RETIREMENT PLAN CONTRIBUTIONS Sen. Ryberg**

This bill adds a section to the *SC Code of Laws*, providing that if the right to receive retirement income by a taxpayer allowed a specified retirement income deduction was earned by the taxpayer while residing in another state which imposed state income tax on the employee's contributions, a credit is allowed against the taxpayer's South Carolina income tax liability in an amount sufficient to offset the taxes paid the other state. This credit must be claimed over the taxpayer's lifetime, and the SC Department of Revenue must prescribe the method of claiming the credit.

**S.876 COMPTROLLER GENERAL/AUDITOR DUTIES Sen. Drummond**

This bill amends sections of Titles 11 and 12 of the *SC Code of Laws*, concerning duties of the SC Comptroller General and local auditors, so as to eliminate unnecessary reports and procedures, eliminate duplication of effort, and provide for more pertinent data. The bill updates laws pertaining to property tax and local financing reporting procedures so as to be consistent with recent statutory changes, technological progress, changes in accounting methods, and changes brought about by Home Rule.

**H.4617 LIFE ESTATES IN REAL ESTATE Rep. Sharpe**

This bill provides that every person having a life estate in real estate is primarily liable to pay taxes and assessments accruing during his life tenancy, and unpaid taxes or assessments accruing during a life tenancy constitute a lien against the real estate that, after due notice to persons affected, may be enforced against the rights of a remainderman (one who is entitled to the remainder of the estate after a particular estate carved out of it has expired) during or after expiration of the tenancy of the person having the life estate.

**H.4619 "STATE RETIREMENT SYSTEMS INVESTMENT SAFEGUARDS ACT" Rep. Wilkins**

This bill is the implementing legislation for the recent amendment to Article X, Section 16 of the *SC Constitution* authorizing the investment and reinvestment of the funds of various state-operated retirement systems in equity securities. Consistent with requirements of the Constitutional amendment, this bill establishes the State Retirement Systems Investment Panel, consisting of five members, one each appointed by the Governor (this appointee serves as Panel chairman), the State Treasurer, the Comptroller General, and the chairs of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. Also consistent with



provisions of the Constitutional amendment, the bill provides for panel members' qualifications, terms of service, duties, and compensation. The bill provides for the authorities of the panel, including a requirement that the panel adopt, in consultation with the State Treasurer, an annual investment plan for the retirement systems for the next fiscal year. This plan must be approved by the State Budget and Control Board, which must provide the panel with a statement of actuarial assumptions and general investment objectives. The plan, which must include specific components specified in the bill, must be reviewed by the panel at least once each for year quarter. The bill provides that no more than forty percent of the market value of the assets of a retirement system may be invested in equity securities, and any increase during any fiscal year in the proportion of the market value of the assets of a retirement system invested in equity securities may not exceed twenty percent of the market value of the assets of that system. The bill specifies that the State Treasurer's Office shall provide staff for the panel and provide investment reports at least quarterly during the fiscal year to the Budget and Control Board, the panel, the Speaker of the House, and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Also, the State Treasurer is required under the bill to provide an annual report, the contents of which are specified in the bill. The costs of administering and operating the investment programs for the retirement systems must be paid from the investment earnings of these systems. The bill provides guidelines and prohibitions for persons who have authority under the bill to invest, manage, or advise in regard to assets of the retirement systems. The bill also provides that the State Budget and Control Board may invest and reinvest the funds of the system in equity securities of a corporation within the United States that is registered on a national securities exchange as provided in the Securities Exchange Act, 1934, or a successor act, or quoted through the National Association of Securities Dealers Automatic Quotations System, or a similar service.

**H.4621 SC POLICE OFFICERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM Rep. Boan**

This bill requires that the benefits paid under the accidental death benefit pension of the SC Police Officers' Retirement System must be adjusted to reflect increases in the Consumer Price Index in the manner provided under *SC Code of Laws*, Section 9-1-1810.

**H.4622 PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT RATIOS Rep. Sheheen**

This bill amends Section 12-43-220(c)(2)(i) of the *SC Code of Laws* regarding qualification for the four percent assessment ratio allowed for owner-occupied residential property. The bill provides that the owner-occupant must have actually owned and occupied the residence as his legal residence and been domiciled at that address on or before December 31 preceding the tax year for which the assessment ratio is first claimed and remain in that status at the time of filing the required application. Current law requires that the owner-occupant must have owned and occupied the residence as his legal residence and been domiciled at that address "for some period during the applicable tax year and remain in that status at the time of filing the application..."

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**SPECIAL NOTE** A cumulative index to the weekly issues of the *Legislative Update* has been added to the *Legislative Update* page on the Worldwide Web. Bills are listed in numerical order in this index. Each bill number is followed by a list of hypertext links (in chronological order) to every reference to that bill in any issue of the *Legislative Update* during the current session, 1997-98. This is an easy way (just click on the links) to find summaries of bills introduced into the House and to follow the progress of a bill through House committees and on the floors of the House and Senate.